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KYRGYZ REPUBLIC

CASE STUDY

Steady Water Brings Higher Harvests

Improved management of water delivery irrigates 700 hectares of land, benefits 5,000 villagers



Omur-Suu farmers at a new bridge over the canal, Leilek Rayon, southern Kyrgyzstan.
Photo: Winrock

“On behalf of my village, I’d like to thank the American people for the help. The overpass controls floods, prevents water losses and ensures irrigation of land. Besides, before, we had to clean this site every time it rained, and the new bridge has made it much easier to cross the canal.”

- 75-year-old Omur-Suu farmer Sulaimankul Khudoikulov.

Challenge

Omur-Suu water users association is located in a remote area of Leilek Rayon in Batken Oblast, southern Kyrgyzstan. Most its irrigated land lies within the glacial outwash plain of the Ak-Suu River. Annual floods continually threaten to wash away the villagers’ fields and constantly clog or wash away canal’s inlets. Only few of Omur-Suu’s canals were still functioning; in the absence of flood control structures and equipment to clean canals or open canal inlets, the amount of irrigated land was shrinking every year. Each irrigation season ensued numerous water conflicts among the farmers.

Initiative

To help the village solve their water-related problems, the USAID Water User Associations Support Program, together with OSCE, offered the Omur-Suu farmers support in improving the management of their association. Through a series of trainings, USAID and OSCE taught the farmers to organize meetings, make joint decisions, and arrange a more equitable schedule for water distribution in the community. USAID also provided a grant and helped organize the renovation of the canal and bought a backhoe loader for canal maintenance. The community constructed a flood overpass to protect the primary canal from floods, a main water distribution point; eight water gates and three outlets to control flood water. The local government donated an office building for the water users association, and USAID provided funds to equip and rehabilitate it. As the villagers started seeing the benefit of common work, their enthusiasm grew exponentially.

Results

The rehabilitated irrigation system now provided a much better and more reliable water supply for the farmers. The association is able to irrigate not only their previously used land, but an additional 116 hectares that had been abandoned due to the lack of water. Due to improved decision-making, association members are able to participate in the water distribution decisions and have confidence that they will receive sufficient amount of water when they need it without having to fight over it with neighbors. “Before, we had to clean this site every time it rained. The new overpass controls floods, prevents water losses, and ensures irrigation of land,” says 75-year-old farmer Khudoikulov Sulaimankul. “The newly constructed bridge has also made it much easier to cross the canal.”